

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NOTICE OF REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Sea Grant College Program, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce.

- **Funding Opportunity Title:** National Marine Aquaculture Initiative
- **Announcement Type:** Notice of request for proposals
- **Funding Opportunity Number:** National Marine Aquaculture Initiative 2004-1
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance(CFDA)Number(s):**
11.417. Sea Grant Support.
- **Dates:** Applications must be received by 5 p.m. (local time) on December 1, 2003 for pre-proposals and by 5 p.m. (local time) February 3, 2004 for full proposals by a state Sea Grant Program [or by the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) in the case of an academic institution in a non-Sea Grant state]. Applications are to be forwarded to the NSGO by the state Sea Grant Programs by 5 p.m. EST on December 8, 2003 for pre-proposals and by 5 p.m. EST February 10, 2004 for full proposals.
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** The purpose of this notice is to advise the public that the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR), through a process that includes other Department of Commerce agencies, including the National Sea Grant College Program, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and the National Ocean Service (NOS), is seeking pre-proposals and full proposals to participate in innovative research, policy and regulatory analysis and development, and outreach and demonstration for the development of marine aquaculture in the United States. For purposes of this competition the Great Lakes, and the species in them, are considered marine. OAR/Sea Grant will hold an open competition for up to \$3.1 million per year for two years(pending available funds), with individual projects up to \$400,000 per year. The purpose is to develop a highly competitive, sustainable marine aquaculture industry that will meet growing consumer demand for aquatic foods and products that are of high quality, safe, competitively priced and are produced in an environmentally responsible manner.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

Worldwide fisheries production will be inadequate to meet the needs of the world's population without supplementation through aquaculture and marine fish enhancement. The development of a robust aquaculture industry can help meet the seafood needs of the domestic market, reduce imports of fishery products and benefit the nation's balance of trade. In the U.S., marine aquaculture has been very slow to develop for a variety of reasons including the lack of appropriate technologies, difficulty in obtaining financing, concerns over environmental impacts, multi-use conflicts in the coastal zone, and difficult and expensive permit and licensing processes, to name a few. However, none of these problems are insurmountable and the need for creating a marine aquaculture sector has never been greater.

NOAA recognizes the role of other Departments such as USDA and DOI and state management partners in aquaculture and coordinates with other Department representatives at the regional level and at the national level through the Joint Sub-Committee on Aquaculture. The NOAA/DOC program is aligned with the National Aquaculture Development Plan created by the Joint Sub-Committee on Aquaculture.

Leveraging and process

This solicitation allows funding of proposals from institutions of higher education, other non-profits, commercial organizations, state, local and Indian tribal governments and Federal agencies. Matching funds are not required but proposals that combine resources from institutions such as universities, Federal and State agencies, private industry and foundations in a regional context will be looked on most favorably.

This will be a two stage competition with full proposals being requested after a review of two-page pre-proposals. The pre-proposal process is to reduce the burden of preparing full proposals that do not have a high probability for funding. Those not submitting pre-proposals are not eligible to submit full proposals, but those submitting pre-proposals, and not recommended to submit full proposals, have the option to submit full proposals. The funds for this competition are in the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research and Federal agencies may participate, however, the National Sea Grant College Program will administer the grant process

B. Program Priorities and Policy Factors:

Research. Aquaculture research can include husbandry; system engineering; nutrition; environmental studies; social sciences; marketing; product transport and product development; and other disciplines. We are encouraging research that addresses priority issues that stand as obstacles to the present and future success of the sustainable aquaculture in the United States. Higher priority will be given to, multi-

disciplinary, multi-investigator, regionally-based studies (See "project costs" under the Evaluation Criteria). Those proposals that have a narrow focus on limited aspects of a larger issue will not be as competitive as multi-partnered proposals dealing with the resolution of a larger issue. NOAA is seeking proposals on enabling technologies for less developed areas of aquaculture such as marine ornamentals, water re-use systems, offshore or open ocean systems, and marine species enhancement. We are also looking for proposals on the siting of aquaculture activities and studies on the environmental, genetic and trophic level consequences of marine aquaculture and marine species enhancement. The goal is to develop new industry opportunities using research resources at Federal, State, academic and private industry facilities.

Demonstration. Projects to allow pilot scale testing of technologies to prove concepts, establish economic feasibility, conduct environmental monitoring and modeling, develop multi-use platforms and evaluate marine species enhancement and production technologies will be considered for this competition.

Regulatory issues. Proposals to define and clarify the use of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) for aquaculture, develop siting criteria and siting methods including aquaculture zoning, develop best management practices and codes of conduct for aquaculture and address the issues of aquaculture in interstate commerce and improved food safety are encouraged and have been identified as high priority topics by industry and federal agencies involved in development of the National Aquaculture Development Plan.

Education/outreach. Education and outreach activities that convey research results to the end users, determine industry needs, educate the public and involve and instruct students in aquaculture-related science will be considered.

Regional and issue coordination. OAR recognizes the need for integrated regional planning and prioritization in order to focus Federal assistance efforts. OAR is seeking proposals to establish mechanisms for broad regional planning that would address NOAA goals to promote environmentally sound aquaculture. In some cases, like water re-use technologies, the issue may have interest across several regions and in such cases a national or multi-regional approach to coordination would be encouraged.

C. Program Authority:

Authority for the National Marine Aquaculture Program is provided under 33 U.S.C. 1121-1131.

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

Depending upon appropriations, it is anticipated that \$3.1 million will be available for proposals of one or two years duration. The maximum request for a single proposal is \$400,000 for a one-year proposal and \$800,000 for a two-year proposal. Approximately 10 awards will be made.]

B. Project/Award Period

Funding will be on an annual basis, with second year renewal depending upon satisfactory demonstration of progress and availability of funds. Starting date for the grant should be June 1, 2004.

Applications must be received by 5 p.m. (local time) on December 1, 2003 for pre-proposals and by 5 p.m. (local time) on February 3, 2004 for full proposals by a state Sea Grant Program [or by the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) in the case of an applicant in a non-Sea Grant state]. Applications are to be forwarded to the NSGO by the state Sea Grant Programs by 5 p.m. EST on December 8, 2003 for pre-proposals and by 5 p.m. EST February 10, 2004 for full proposals

C. Type of funding instrument

Grants or Cooperative Agreements will be awarded depending upon the degree of government involvement. Cooperative agreements will be awarded if government scientists are overseeing or coordinating any of the research activities with recipients.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Individuals, institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, commercial organizations, Federal, State, local and Indian tribal governments, are eligible. Only those who submit preliminary proposals by the preliminary proposal deadline are eligible to submit full proposals. Those submitting preliminary proposals by the preliminary proposal deadline that are not recommended by the pre-proposal review process still are eligible to submit full proposals.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

There are no cost sharing requirements but proposals that combine resources from institutions such as universities, Federal and State agencies, private industry and foundations in a regional context will be looked on most favorably (See "Project Costs" under the Evaluation Criteria).

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. ADDRESS TO REQUEST APPLICATION PACKAGE.

Application packages may be obtained from Sea Grant College Program Directors. The addresses of the Sea Grant College Program directors may be found at (<http://www.nsgo.seagrant.org/SGDirectors.html>) or may also be obtained by contacting Mr. Joseph Brown at the NSGO (mail address: National Sea Grant College Program, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910; phone: 301-713-2438 x135; or e-mail: joe.brown@noaa.gov). Applications packages may also be obtained directly from the NSGO by contacting Mr. Brown.

B. CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Preliminary Proposal Guidelines.

To prevent the expenditure of effort that may not be successful, proposers must first submit preliminary proposals. Preliminary proposals must be single-or double-spaced, typewritten in at least a 10 point font, and printed on metric A4(210mm x297mm) or 8 ½"x 11" paper. The following information should be included:

- 1) Signed title page: The title page should be signed by the Principal Investigator and should clearly identify the program area being addressed by starting the project title with the National Marine Aquaculture Initiative." Principal Investigators and collaborators should be identified by affiliation and contact information. The total amount of Federal funds and matching funds being requested or provided should be listed for each budget period, as well as the source of the matching funds.
- 2) A concise (2-page limit) description of the project, its experimental design, its expected output or products, the anticipated users of the information, and its anticipated impact. Proposers should use the Evaluation Criteria for additional guidance in preparing the preliminary proposals.
- 3) Resumes (1-page limit) of the Principal Investigators.
- 4) Proposers are encouraged (but not required) to include a separate page suggesting reviewers that the proposers believe are especially well qualified to review the proposal. Proposers may also designate persons they would prefer not review the proposal, indicating why. These suggestions will be considered during the review process.

Three copies of the preliminary proposals must be submitted to the state Sea Grant Program Director or, for investigators in non-Sea Grant states, directly to the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) by the times and dates listed under the "Dates" section of this announcement. However, ten copies of the preliminary proposal would facilitate the review process. Preliminary proposals submitted to state Sea Grant Programs will be forwarded, along with a cover letter, to the NSGO by the dates indicated in this announcement.

Full Proposal Guidelines

Each full proposal should include the items listed below. All pages should be single- or double-spaced, typewritten in at least a 10-point font, and printed on metric A4 (210

mm x 297 mm) or 8 ½" x 11" paper. Brevity will assist reviewers and program staff in dealing effectively with proposals. Therefore, the Project Description may not exceed 15 pages. Tables and visual materials, including charts, graphs, maps, photographs and other pictorial presentations are included in the 15-page limitation. Conformance to the 15-page limitation will be strictly enforced. All information needed for review of the proposal should be included in the main text; no appendices are permitted.

2. Required Elements

1) Signed title page: The title page should be signed by the Principal Investigator and the institutional representative and should clearly identify the program area being addressed by starting the project title with National Marine Aquaculture Initiative, as appropriate. The Principal Investigator and institutional representative should be identified by full name, title, organization, telephone number, e-mail address, and mailing address. The total amount of Federal funds and matching funds being requested should be listed for each budget period.

2) Project Summary: This information is very important. It is critical that the project summary accurately describe the research being proposed and convey all essential elements of the research. The project summary should include: 1. Title: Use the exact title as it appears in the rest of the application. 2. Investigators: List the names and affiliations of each investigator who will significantly contribute to the project. Start with the Principal Investigator. 3. Funding request for each year of the project, including matching funds if appropriate. 4. Project Period: Start and completion dates. Proposals should request a start date of June 1, 2004. This section should include the rationale for the project, the scientific or technical objectives and/or hypotheses to be tested, and a brief summary of work to be completed.

3) Project Description (15-page limit):

Introduction/Background/Justification: Subjects that the investigator(s) may wish to include in this section are: a) current state of knowledge; b) contributions that the study will make to the particular discipline or subject area; and c) contributions the study will make toward addressing the problems of marine aquaculture issues.

Research or Technical Plan: a) Objectives to be achieved, hypotheses to be tested; b) Experimental design and statistical analysis to be used; c) Plan of work – discuss how stated project objectives will be achieved; and d) Role of project personnel.

Output: Describe the project outputs that will enhance the Nation's ability to improve the status of marine aquaculture

Coordination with other Program Elements: Describe any coordination with other agency programs or ongoing research efforts. Describe any other proposals that are essential to the success of this proposal.

References and Literature Citations: Should be included but will not be counted in the 15 page project description limit.

4) Budget and Budget Justification: There should be a separate budget for each year of the project as well as a cumulative annual budget for the entire project. Subcontracts should have a separate budget page. Matching funds must be shown in appropriate budget categories. Each annual budget should include a separate budget justification page that itemizes all budget items in sufficient detail to enable reviewers to evaluate the appropriateness of the funding requested. Please pay special attention to any travel, supply or equipment budgets and provide details. For proposals to either of the competition categories the total dollar amount of indirect costs must not exceed the indirect cost rate negotiated and approved by the cognizant Federal agency prior to the proposed effective date of the award or 100 percent of the total proposed direct costs dollar amount in the application, whichever is less.

5) Current and Pending Support: Applicants must provide information on all current and pending Federal support for ongoing projects and proposals, including subsequent funding in the case of continuing grants. The number of person-months per year to be devoted to the projects must be stated, regardless of source of support. Similar information must be provided for all proposals already submitted or submitted concurrently to other possible Federal sponsors, including those within NOAA.

6) Vitae (2 pages maximum per investigator)

7) Standard Application Forms: See Address section for web address for forms. Forms can also be obtained from state Sea Grant programs or the National Sea Grant Office. The following forms must be included:

(a) Standard Forms 424, Application for Federal Assistance, 424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs; and 424B, Assurances - Non-Construction Programs, (Rev 4-88). Applications should clearly identify the program area being addressed by starting the project title National Marine Aquaculture Initiative, as appropriate. Please note that both the Principal Investigator and an administrative contact should be identified in Section 5 of the SF424. For Section 10, applicants for National Marine Aquaculture Initiative program areas should enter "11.417" for the CFDA Number and "Sea Grant Support" for the title. The form must contain the original signature of an authorized representative of the applying institution.

(b) Primary Applicant Certifications. All primary applicants must submit a completed Form CD-511, "Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters; Drug-Free Workplace Requirements and Lobbying," and the following explanations are hereby provided:

(i) Non-procurement Debarment and Suspension. Prospective participants (as defined at 15 CFR Part 26, Section 105) are subject to 15 CFR Part 26, "Non-procurement Debarment and Suspension" and the related section of the certification form prescribed above applies;

(ii) Drug-Free Workplace. Grantees (as defined at 15 CFR Part 26, Section 605) are subject to 15 CFR Part 26, Subpart F, "Government wide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants)" and the related section of the certification form prescribed above applies;

(iii) Anti-Lobbying. Persons (as defined at 15 CFR Part 28, Section 105) are subject to the lobbying provisions of 31 U.S.C. 1352, "Limitation on use of appropriated funds to influence certain Federal contracting and financial transactions," and the lobbying section of the certification form prescribed above applies to applications/bids for grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts for more than \$100,000, and loans and loan guarantees for more than \$150,000, or the single family maximum mortgage limit for affected programs, whichever is greater; and

(iv) Anti-Lobbying Disclosures. Any applicant that has paid or will pay for lobbying using any funds must submit an SF-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," as required under 15 CFR Part 28, Appendix B.

(c) Lower Tier Certifications. Recipients shall require applicants/bidders for sub-grants, contracts, subcontracts, or other lower tier covered transactions at any tier under the award to submit, if applicable, a completed Form CD-512, "Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion-Lower Tier Covered Transactions and Lobbying" and disclosure form, SF-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities." Form CD-512 is intended for the use of recipients and should not be transmitted to the Department of Commerce (DOC). SF-LLL submitted by any tier recipient or sub-recipient should be submitted to DOC in accordance with the instructions contained in the award document.

How to Submit

Although investigators are not required to submit more than 3 copies of the proposal, the normal review process requires 10 copies. Investigators are encouraged to submit sufficient proposal copies for the full review process if they wish all reviewers to receive color, unusually sized (not 8.5 x 11"), or otherwise unusual materials submitted as part of the proposal. Only three copies of the Federally required forms are needed.

C. Submission Dates and Times

The pre-proposals are due by 5 p.m. (local time) on December 1, 2003 and full proposals are due by 5 p.m. (local time) on February 3, 2004 at a state Sea Grant Program [or by the National Sea Grant Office (NSGO) in the case of an applicant from a non-sea Grant state]. Applications are to be forwarded to the NSGO by the state Sea Grant Programs by 5 p.m. EST on December 8, 2003 for pre-proposals and by 5 p.m. EST on February 10, 2004 for full proposals.

Applications will be stamped with the date received at the state Sea Grant Program or the NSGO. Applications arriving after the above deadlines will be accepted for review only if the applicant can document that the application was provided to a delivery

service that guaranteed delivery prior to the specified closing date and time. In any event, applications received by the NSGO or the state Sea Grant Programs later than two business days following the closing date will not be accepted.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this program are not subject to Executive Order 12372, "Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs."

E. Funding Restrictions

No special restrictions apply.

F. Other Submission Requirements

Prospective applicants living in Sea Grant States should submit their preliminary and full proposals to the their state's Sea Grant program. Addresses for state Sea Grant programs are available at www.mdsg.umd.edu/ngo/research or by contacting NOAA at National Sea Grant College Program, R/SG, Attn: Gulf Oyster Industry Competition, Room 11838, NOAA, 1315 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910, Phone: 301-713-2451. Applicants from non-Sea Grant states should send preliminary and full proposals to the above address.

All applicants are to submit hard copy proposals only. Facsimile transmissions and electronic mail submission of proposals will not be accepted. The hard copies may be submitted by postal mail, commercial delivery service, or hand-delivery.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria for proposals submitted for support under the National Marine Aquaculture Initiative are as follows:

Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (maximum 40 points): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and or relevance to NOAA, federal, regional, state, or local activities. For the National Marine Aquaculture Initiative competition, this includes: the degree to which the activity, if successful, will advance the state of the science, industry, or state-of-the-art for marine aquaculture.

Technical/scientific Merit (maximum 40 points). This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives.

Overall Qualifications of Investigators (maximum 5 points). This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project.

Project Costs(Maximum 5 points): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For the National Marine Aquaculture Initiative competition, this includes: Degree to which inter-institutional and multi-disciplinary programs have been developed in order to leverage funds and resources.

Outreach, and Education(maximum 10 points). This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding NOAA's mission to protect the Nation's natural resources. For the National Marine Aquaculture competition, this includes: Degree to which the potential users of the results, i.e., industry, have been involved in the planning of the activity, will be involved in the execution of the activity and/or are providing funds and whether there is a plan to disseminate the results to user groups and the public.

B. Review and Selection Process

An initial administrative review is conducted at both the pre-proposal and full proposal stages to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. A pre-proposal review panel, to be organized by the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, will be convened at the NOAA offices in Silver Spring, MD and will review all preliminary proposals.

The pre-proposal review panel will consist of government, academic, industry and non-government organization (NGO) representatives. This panel will assign points on an individual basis to each pre-proposal based on the evaluation criteria and priorities contained in this request for proposals. Those receiving an average score of the individual ratings of 81 points and above will be asked to submit full proposals. No consensus advice will be provided by the review panel to the NOAA Sea Grant Managers..

Full proposals submitted to the state Sea Grant Programs or the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research will be sent to peer reviewers for written reviews. Reviewers will be asked to evaluate the proposals using the evaluation criteria listed in this announcement.

Complete full proposals and accompanying written reviews will be evaluated by a peer review panel comprised of government, academic, industry and NGO experts organized by OAR. The members of the panel will provide individual point scores for each proposal using the evaluation criteria listed in this announcement and the input provided by the written reviews, but there will be no consensus advice. Their evaluations will be considered by the NOAA Sea Grant managers for final project selection.

For proposals rated above 81 points in average score, the NOAA Sea Grant managers will make the final project selection. They will award in rank order of the merit review ratings unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon 1,2.a, 2.c, 2.d, 2.e, 4,5, or 6 of the follow factors:

1. Availability of funding
 2. Balance/distribution of funds
 - a. Geographically
 - b. By type of institutions
 - c. By type of partners
 - d. By research areas
 - e. By project types
3. Duplication of other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA/federal agencies
4. Program priorities and policy factors
5. Applicant's prior award performance
6. Partnerships with/Participation of targeted groups

For Selection Factor 4, see Paragraph I.B. above.

Investigators may be asked to modify objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to approval of the award. Subsequent administrative processing will be in accordance with current NOAA grants procedures. A summary statement of the scientific review by the peer panel will be provided to each applicant.

Applications must reflect the total budget necessary to accomplish the project. Cost sharing is not required but encouraged as part of the selection criteria listed here (See "Project Costs" in the Evaluation Criteria). The appropriateness of all cost-sharing will be determined on the basis of guidance provided in applicable Federal cost principles. The applicants will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the grant award.

C. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

Recommendations on pre-proposals will be made by December 20, 2003 and full proposals by March 1, 2004. Grant start dates should be June 1, 2004.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

The notice of award is signed by the NOAA Grants Officer and is the authorizing document. It is provided by postal mail to the appropriate business office of the recipient organization.

The National Sea Grant Office will notify unsuccessful applicants, in writing, by postal mail. Those proposals that are not ultimately selected for funding will be destroyed.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Administrative and national policy requirements for all Department of Commerce awards are contained in the Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements published in the Federal Register on October 1, 2001 (66 FR 49917), as amended by the Federal Register notice published on October 30, 2002 (67 FR 66109). You may obtain a copy of these by notices by contacting the agency contact(s) under Section VII, or by going to the website at:

www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces140.html.

Applicants whose proposed projects may have an environmental impact should furnish sufficient information to assist proposal reviewers in assessing the potential environmental consequences of supporting the project.

C. Reporting

All financial and progress reports shall be submitted in triplicate (one original and two copies). Financial reports are to be submitted to the NOAA Grants Officer and Performance (technical) reports are to be submitted to the NOAA program officer. Financial reports are semi-annual and Performance reports are annual.

VII. Agency Contact(s)

James P. McVey, Program Director for Aquaculture, or Mary Robinson, Secretary, National Sea Grant Office, 301 713 2451, facsimile 301-713-0799, e-mail- Jim.McVey@NOAA.gov.